

Commentary

Ethics of Field Research for the Hopi Tribe

By Kurt E Dongoske (Hopi Cultural Preservation Office), T J Ferguson (Institute of the North American West) and Michael Yeatts (Hopi Cultural Preservation Office)

The ethics of field research for anthropologists employed by the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office presents daily challenges that stem from the cross-cultural contexts in which the work is conducted. On every project sponsored by the Hopi Tribe, the professional ethics of anthropology have to be assessed and reconciled with the ethics and values of the *Hopi Way*—the collection and use of field data obtained in ethnographic interviews must be done so as not to violate either the individual informant's trust, privileged clan or religious knowledge, or the culture and beliefs of the Hopi people.

Ethical issues addressed in this essay include (1) clear communication to the people anthropologists study of the aims and potential ramifications of all their professional activities; (2) the rights, interests, safety and sensitivities of those who entrust information to anthropologists; (3) the fair compensation to cultural consultants and informants for the information and help anthropologists receive; (4) responsibility anthropologists have to the people whose lives and cultures they study; and (5) the ongoing obligation of anthropologists to communicate and assess both the positive and negative consequences of their activities. The ways these ethical issues are defined and resolved offer a valuable lesson for our profession.

Hopi Perceptions of Anthropology

The current perception of anthropology at Hopi has been shaped by the practices of past anthropological and scholarly research. While recognizing the value of some of this research, many Hopi feel that much of that research was conducted under false pretenses for the personal gain of non-Indian scholars who benefit financially and professionally from the publications they write. These Hopi think that many anthropologists did not make full disclosure of their research goals and objectives to their Hopi "informants." As a consequence, esoteric knowledge was inappropriately made available to the public through articles and books. This information is then subject to appropriation and (mis)use by "new age" seekers in ways that most Hopi find objectionable. Additionally, some of these anthropological publications contain inaccuracies, distortions and errors of fact, and once published, become a false standard of truth.

As anthropologists directly employed by the Hopi Tribe, we think that anthropology can and should play a positive role at Hopi. The key to meaningful anthropological research conducted by the Hopi Cultural

Preservation Office (CPO) lies in the fact that it is the Hopi Tribe that decides what research issues are appropriate.

Communicating Research

Lack of clear communication has been the legacy of many past anthropologists at Hopi. In an attempt to avoid this situation, the CPO has established a Cultural Resources Advisory Task Team (CRATT). As a large part of its duties, the CRATT assists in the design, conduct and evaluation of anthropological research. The CRATT is composed of a group of about 18 men who are clan elders and priests, representing virtually all 12 Hopi villages and 14 religious societies.

All anthropological research undertaken by the CPO thus entails the active participation of tribal members at the village level as well as the tribal governmental level. Interviews with individual Hopi begin with an explanation of the purpose of the research and proposed use of the information being collected. We find the opportunity to explain our research methods and goals in plain language to a group of interested and distinguished tribal advisers to be challenging and intellectually rewarding. The feedback during these dialogues enhances our research in many unanticipated and valuable ways.

Role and Treatment of Informants

In the past many anthropologists have used Hopi people as "informants" rather than as formal consultants or colleagues. Information was collected by anthropologists who interpreted and then received credit for that information by publishing it under their own names. Although many anthropologists relied extensively on the intellectual guidance of the Hopi with whom they worked, these Hopi have received little credit. Many of these Hopi informants also remained anonymous in an attempt to avoid family and community ridicule.

One Hopi scholar, Hartmann Lomawaima, has criticized the anthropological tradition of anonymity because it both prevents tribal members from validating the unnamed sources and perpetuates the "We-They" attitude, implying that it takes an anthropologist to make sense out of traditional information. In the field research undertaken by the Hopi CPO, there is no question that the real experts on Hopi are the Hopi people themselves. Anthropologists apply their technical skills to the collection of information, but it is the Hopi people who clarify ambiguities and ascertain cultural meanings.

The Hopi consultants choose whether to remain anonymous in reports or be identified by name. To date, all Hopi we have interviewed have chosen to be identified. We feel that this is due to the fact that there are no secrets in the research we are conducting and that the research has been sanctioned by the Hopi Tribe. The purpose and goals of the research as set by the Hopi Tribe are understood, and review by the CRATT helps to ensure that only appropriate information is released in the reports and publications.

Fair Compensation

Although the members of the CRATT hold distinguished positions of authority within the traditional social structure of their villages, their participation on the committee is a secular activity that is not a part of their religious responsibilities. Since participation in the CRATT takes these men away from their regular tasks and duties, the policy of the Hopi Tribe is to offer a paid honorarium for the time they spend on consultation activities.

The Hopi Tribe provides the CPO with an operating budget that funds a portion of the honoraria paid to CRATT members. Because many of the CRATT field trips and consultation meetings are requested by the federal land-managing agencies sponsoring consultation in association with federal



Hopi Cultural Resources Advisory Task Team members (L-R) Harlan Williams, Frank Mofsie, Merwin Kooyahoema and Dalton Taylor review a report prepared by the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office (Photo by T J Ferguson, courtesy of the Institute of the North American West).

undertakings, the CPO requests that these agencies or researchers fund the CRATT honoraria.

Many federal and state officials, anthropologists and archaeologists do not accord traditional knowledge the same value as Western education. This view is demonstrated in the double standard that has been commonly applied in ethnohistoric research—those who have the most knowledge are the least likely to be viewed as "educated" and therefore less apt to be compensated for their knowledge. This situation stems from such historical prejudices as the traditional view that Native Americans as subjects of research cannot be active participants in research as cultural experts. Such a view objectifies people and reduces them to data, with the result that some anthropologists refuse to "pay data."

Moreover, many federal and state officials assume that because traditional concerns and places are of great significance, Native Americans should be willing to volunteer their time and knowledge to protect them. This would be a valid assumption if the project in question were controlled by Native Americans; but such a situation is the exception rather than the rule. Native American groups rarely propose actions likely to destroy resources with cultural value. More often, negative consequences occur when federal, state and private agencies pursue their own development agenda. We cannot expect tribes to volunteer information before a federal agency has made a firm commitment to both the consultation process and the responsible management of traditional information.

Responsibility to Those Studied

Because the information we collect is often of such an esoteric nature that its public dissemination could have detrimental effects for the Hopi people, the Hopi CPO seeks to maintain confidentiality. Sometimes the Hopi Tribe decides to release details about the location or the use of sacred areas and other sensitive cultural sites if it will help the tribe attain its goals to preserve or properly manage these sites. Occasionally this information is released to state or federal agencies but not divulged in reports made available to the public. In either case, it is the Tribe that determines what information should be released and to whom, not the anthropologists.

In addition, Hopi are as concerned about diffusing information within the tribe as about divulging information to non-Hopi. Most of the esoteric knowledge at Hopi is transmitted only to clan members or initiates in various religious societies. Because people from specific villages, clans and reli-

gious societies do not wish to expose sensitive knowledge to other Hopi, the CPO maintains careful control over its tape-recorded and transcribed interviews.

Consequences of Research and Publication

While some may think the Hopi Tribe's right of review constitutes censorship of the work of the anthropologists it employs, we find that the review process presents an unparalleled opportunity to correct mistakes, learn more about what we are researching and better evaluate the impact our research will have if disseminated publicly. This helps fulfill the ethical imperative not to harm the people we study. We have never been directed to change any of our findings or scholarly conclusions, whereas we have been asked to correct mistakes or not to release certain information to the public.

The contractual right of the Hopi Tribe to approve publication of the research it sponsors is no different than the proprietary rights exercised by businesses and governmental agencies. This right of review means that selected Hopi research may be published. The CPO has approved several publications about its research, and additional publications are planned.

Not all publications are approved, however, and this sets up a dynamic tension between the ethics of non-Indian anthropologists to share their knowledge with other anthropologists and Hopi ethics, which prohibit the dissemination of certain types of information. In the Hopi CPO, this tension is diffused by open discussion of the ethical systems of both anthropologists and Hopi in an attempt to find a middle ground acceptable to all parties. In the meantime, the anthropologists employed by CPO are hired with the understanding that the Hopi Tribe has a legal right to decide whether or not their research will be published.

Developing a New Anthropology

We believe that the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office has made exciting progress toward developing a new anthropology that is both relevant to and respectful of Hopi concerns. The legal rights of the Hopi Tribe vis-à-vis anthropological research that are clearly stated in research contracts help clarify ethical issues for all involved. Because close personal relationships are as important as legal contracts, our goal is to cultivate cooperation between anthropologists and Hopi to meet the objectives of the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office.

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